5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin N54

dividual Arab is free to transfer his allegiance to another chieftain if he so desires. Such a transfer quite frequently takes place. In a loose general way each tribe has certain areas over which it grazes its camels and its goats and sheep. In proportion to the number of animals the area covered is enormous, for throughout the hot, dry summer months locations must be frequently changed and new pastures found. The prosperity of the desert Arab, poor as it is at the best, depends on a rainfall so scanty that one marvels at the existence of any life at all. There are whole districts, like the Great Southern Desert and the black plain encountered between Hasa and Riyadh, where not even the hardiest Bedouin attempts to live. In winter the temperature goes down so low that frost is seen, and in the summer the country glows with heat like a furnace. No mineral resources are known at present, and there is no reason to suppose that the most careful scientific search would find any.

Bedouins who live in the desert own a certain number of camels, and turn them out to graze over large areas. Camels require little water and can go for three days, if necessary, without a drink, an ability which adds enormously to their value in a country where it is frequently necessary to travel scores of miles to find a well. The camel is the one support of Bedouin life. Camel's milk is the principal article of diet, with a few dates for a dessert and camel's meat as an addition for feasts and high days. The hair of the camel furnishes clothes, and his back affords the only method of transportation possible in the desert. Indeed the Arab looks on the camel as God's special gift to the desert nomad, and he is not far mistaken.

Where wells are somewhat close together and the for-

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 MI Middle East
Bedouin 1934

main away from regions where guests are likely to be numerous. The road between Hofuf, the capital of Hasa, and Oqair, its nearest port, affords excellent pasturage for goats and camels, and water is easily available for watering the stock. The traveler, however, will probably not see so much as one tent in that whole region. Caravans are coming and going continually, and the poor Bedouin cannot possibly entertain so many. Stern necessity compels him to go where the demands on his very slender resources will be smaller.

But the finest hospitality that I have ever enjoyed has been at the hands of the Bedouins. Ten years ago in the vicinity of Kuwait we saw a good deal of them, for there is always a fringe of Bedouin tents surrounding that city. The American missionaries were far from welcome in the town. A rival Turkish doctor had been imported by a local Mohammedan society and stocked with medicines and instruments so the poor might be treated free and every excuse for visiting the missionary's establishment removed. But there was no trace of hostility among the Bedouins and it was a great pleasure to visit their tents. We had a number of patients there and had to visit them often. When the dressings and treatments were finished, we stayed and visited together. There were questions about America, and the way to come from there to Arabia, and I in my turn learned a great deal about them and their utterly poverty-stricken lives. The way in which the medical missionary was admitted to the circle as one of the family is perhaps the most prized memory that twelve years' experience affords.

In the calendar of the desert the real red letter days are those when a wedding in the sheikh's family or some other event is the occasion for a great feast. Every

Sr Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 MI Middle East
Bedouin 1854

spacious chafes his spirit and he looks with contempt and pity on the poor creatures that are willing to spend their days in the narrow confines of a town. This pity is for the cultivator and equally for the land-owner and the merchant, who so far worship their bodies that they will swathe them in silk and deck them with gold, a thing permissible for women, but contemptible for a man. The hardest work of the desert Arab is concerned with leading his flocks and with breaking up and repitching camp. As a result, he develops a great distaste for manual labor. He regards it as degrading, and no small amount of his dislike for life in a town rests on that fact. Digging up the ground, patiently caring for plants and crops, and all the work of the agriculturist he looks on as beneath him. Free men were created for something better than that.

It is the impression of a stranger to the country that not a blade of grass or a single date palm could be raised in all Arabia except in the oases where the gardeners work. The Arabs tell us that this is far from the truth. There are many places where water can be found close to the surface and where gardening could be carried on profitably. In connection with the *Akhwan* movement of puritan Wahabi Mohammedanism that has swept over all inland Arabia in the last few years, one of the efforts of the leaders has been to settle a certain number of the new converts in towns and villages. Altogether some sixty-five new settlements have been started since the inception of the movement. Doubtless most of these are very small, but there are a few of considerable size, and two or three are small cities of perhaps five thousand inhabitants. The Arabs insist that there are many other such places, where communities might spring up

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a chronological sequence in this division as the simpler economic 020
activities of food-gathering and hunting invariably precede the more advanced pursuits of tillage and animal husbandry.

While for a long time the theory was upheld,[1] that human civilization developed in three stages; hunting, breeding and farming, a number of students of human culture[2] have pointed out that stock-breeding does not necessarily precede agriculture, as there have been primitive peoples who began cultivation without ever passing through the pastoral stage. A more suitable gradation of human society was introduced by its dichotomy according to the economic activities of food-gathering and food-producing. This classification distinguishes the parasitic existence of the collectors from the productive life of the breeders and farmers. The pastoral nomad shares with the primitive food-gatherer the constant need for wandering, while as breeder of animals his economy is productive.

Nomadism cannot be regarded as a primitive stage of human civilization, but must be viewed as a mode of life which developed in response to certain geographical conditions. In the final analysis it is not the people, but the natural conditions of soil, climate and water which will determine the forms of existence, pastoral or settled agrarian.

Pastoralism in the Middle East has been regarded[3] as an unsatisfactory alternative to agriculture. Considering the 361 311

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1. Boas, 1938, p. 283
2. Eduard Hahn, Alexander von Humboldt and others
3. Fisher, 1950, p. 119

361 desert with its limited opportunities for finding means of
311 sustenance has been held the only possible answer to the rigors of the geographical environment.

This view, however, can be challenged. In the Arabian peninsula nomadism may be inevitable, but with regards to the potentially cultivable areas of Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Transjordan, for centuries used by the tribes as grazing grounds for their flocks, the situation is different. The land was not always barren, vast stretches of fertile soil turned into desert because of the nomads whose destructive way of living was victorious, where settled society was not powerful enough to check Bedouin incursions.

361 While the nomads contribute their share to the general
433 economy, it cannot be maintained that the roving existence is a geographical necessity. The nomad in general responds and adapts himself to the desert, but sometimes he actually creates it. Only on a higher level of civilization is the attempt made by people to liberate themselves from the limitations of the environment. In the past and at present settlers have often displayed the tendency to condition the land to suit them. The relationship of man towards the land and the amount of care he gives the soil that sustains him can serve as a measuring rod for the standards of his civilization.

361 Prosperity in the Middle East of antiquity was the result
311 of intelligent utilization of land and water resources. Present day devastation is to a great extent the outcome of Bedouin economy and neglect.

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members of his tribe. Besides collecting the taxes for the central government he imposes and collects his own levies.[1]

Of course, there are exceptions to the general pattern. 622 566 423 425
There is, for example, the case of the Bedouin tribe Abu Kishk that owned 20 000 dunums of land in the Sharon.[2] The sheikh's family in whose name the land was registered, sold 10 000 dunums to the Jews. The whole tribe benefited from this transaction. Part of the money was invested in a 145 dunum orange plantation 425 311 871
and used to dig new wells, part of it was distributed among the individual members who were thus enabled to exchange their tents for stone houses. Enough cash was left for building a school. The social, economic and sanitary conditions of the entire tribe were thus greatly improved by the actions of the tribal sheikh.

CHAPTER XI

Attitude of the Tribesmen towards Settlement

The Bedouin's traditional contempt for agriculture will not 241 731
be changed, before he is psychologically conditioned for sedentary life. Economic disasters and subsequent starvation will not in themselves materially alter this attitude. After the drought seasons of 1931 and 1932 the situation of the Transjordan Bedouin was desperate; 1946/47 was likewise a year of deficient rainfall in Transjordan when about 50 per cent of the livestock perished.[3] But still we do not hear of a great number of Beni Sakhr tribesmen

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1. Himadeh, 1930, p. 430
2. Ashkenazi, 1938, pp. 18-19
3. Losses amounted to sheep and goats — 40%, cattle — 45%, camels — 50%. cf. Final Report, part 2, 1949, p. 10